

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **13-A**

BALTIMORE SUN
5 June 1986

Seeking Truth in Babble

AGAINST the background of Chernobyl, attempts to slow down and eventually end the nuclear-arms race take on life-and-death meaning that transcends joustings in Geneva over the

Washington. meaningful basis for knowing whether ceasing to abide by Salt-2 is going to make us more secure, or more vulnerable to a more-likely nuclear war.

We don't even know what our government's rationale is. One official tells us that Salt-2 "is obsolete" and that, furthermore, the Soviets have been cheating. Another suggests that the U.S. can't build a "Star Wars" defense system without throwing off the treaty restraints.

But many American scientists are saying that a Star Wars defense (Strategic Defense Initiative) becomes more difficult to achieve if the enemy has more nuclear warheads targeted on the United States, and that renunciation of Salt-2 opens the way for such a warhead build-up.

Whom do we believe? A former defense secretary, Robert McNamara, who says abandonment of Salt-2 will lead to a heightened arms race and greater peril, or a current secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, who says Salt-2 is just a roadblock to U.S. progress toward more reliable protections against a Soviet nuclear attack?

We don't know, so we ponder the meaning of Chernobyl nervously, wondering why we must decide whom we must believe on the basis of so little trustworthy information.

By Carl T. Rowan

jargon of "throw-weights," MIRVings, nuclear triads, Vladivostok accords. Yet, Chernobyl has not put any discernible brakes on a ghastly arms race that seems to have a life of its own.

The Reagan administration's renouncing of the never-ratified 1979 Salt-2 treaty raises a serious problem for you and me: We all live or die by the efficiency or foolishness of our bureaucrats and intelligence agents, and perhaps according to the ideologies of top-level officials who make arms-control decisions on the basis of what they think is "intelligence." And you and I are almost helpless lookers-on.

We Americans have more freedoms, more access to the information essential to decision-making in a free society, than any other people on earth. Still, most of us have no